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letters

Breaking the Queer Mold

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to raise concern regarding Marty Davis' comments in the "Shutter to Think" column [June 16].

It's hurtful that you have so much shame for your community. It seems to me what you're saying is that you want people to see that there are those of us who prefer to adhere to the typical heterosexual archetype of monogamous coupling. There's nothing wrong with that, and I fully support your reach for such. But I don't feel that sentiment is being reciprocated on your end. I think it's important to not forget where we came from and who we are.

Regardless of your religious background, whatever brought the human race into existence, sexuality is a part of that, and I feel there's no need to be ashamed or embarrassed by it. There are those of us in the community who recognize and push for our sexual freedom—the same freedom that allows us to be homosexual in the first place. Freedom from bourgeois morality, freedom from oppression and freedom from being railroaded to live life according to the "moral majority."

There are those of us who are proud to be sexually free, and we have every right to demonstrate in the Pride Parade...right along next to the drag queens, leather daddies and "normal looking" gays and lesbians.

Those queens in buttless chaps and lesbians running around topless say to the world: "We don't feel pressured to fit in to the mainstream to be accepted. We're not hurting anyone, and we have every right to demand that you accept us into society as well." Grandma being too mentally challenged to understand it doesn't make it wrong, and hiding those members of the GLBT community is not going to help rid society (or you) of homophobia.

I, for one, can identify with this attitude. I don't want to be "married." I don't strive to live up to heterosexual role models. I don't feel that I need to (or should have to) to be a part of this society, and I don't have passive-aggressive subconscious tendencies that dictate my self-worth according to how easily I can emulate heterosexual couples. My opinion is that we should be defining ourselves as a community instead of letting mainstream society do it for us. However, I fully support your right to be treated as an equal and to have this option available to you should you choose this path.

Are you saying that only conservative members of the GLBT community should be accepted? That sounds a lot like "Only rich white heterosexual men should have rights in this country" to me.

In your article you state, "I fail to see the correlation between Pride and nudity/inappropriate behavior." Your willful blindness to our community will aid in tearing us apart. You also mention that you're far less inclined to empower those who do. Shame on you for perpetuating disgust for your own community. Shame on you for not supporting those of us who don't believe exactly as you do (sounds pretty "Bush-y" to me), shame on you for leaving us behind and helping the right wing keep us down, and shame on your close-minded attitude toward your fellow GLBT brothers and sisters. It's unfortunate that you cannot find a place in your heart for those of us who do not fit into the mold of what you think a homosexual should be.

JIM HOWARD
Portland

For a Good Time, Call the Democratic Party

TO THE EDITOR:

The Democratic Party of Oregon State Convention was a fantastically awesome experience. As a delegate from Multnomah County, I was not sure what to expect and I was nervous.

Most of my political activism has been around queer issues and working within a mostly queer environment. I've volunteered at Basic Rights Oregon, worked on No on 36 and a number of candidate campaigns, and joined the Oregon GLBT Democratic Caucus. I hadn't been active in anything like the Democratic Party on an organizational level.

Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, spoke to the delegates. In his windup portion of his speech, typically the part meant to get everyone excited and revved up, he closed with a statement about equality for every American, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. For me, it was pretty significant statement for two reasons. One reason was that he actually used all the words and not just "GLBT" or just "gay and lesbian." The second and possibly more personally significant reason was the fact he said the "t word," transgender. OK, so little things make me happy. When you are possibly the one and only "t" at the DPO convention, it's a bright and hopeful day.

One of the most meaningful things that struck me while attending the platform discussions was the support of marriage equality and anti-discrimination legislation based on sexual orientation and gender identity coming from the overwhelming majority.

All in all, it was a wonderfully rejuvenating experience. I'm happy I decided to get involved and participate. I was impressed with the overall strong and respectful support for queer political issues by such a broad spectrum of everyday people from all over Oregon. I felt that I had a place at the table and that my voice was heard and acknowledged. However, we must continually work as hard as possible individually and as a community to achieve equality.

We, the GLBT community, have an excellent viable opportunity to greatly strengthen our political goals of true equality and end discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity by becoming more actively involved in the Democratic Party on a local level. Winning elections is tedious and sometimes hard work. Often, volunteers do the bulk of the work. By stepping up and volunteering, you become more of a part of the process and you amplify your personal influence on many levels, which also means you are more likely to influence your personal social circle. If one or two of your close friends volunteer some of their time, you can see the ripple effect starting to take place. By volunteering, you have more opportunity to be heard on the issues that concern your well-being and future by those who represent us in government. It's also a very powerful and wonderful way for people to put a face with words like "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender" who might not otherwise.

LAURA CALVO
Portland

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Log onto www.justout.com and let us know.